



HGZine

Issue 14 | March 2007

Free Magazine For Handheld Gamers. Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...

>>> **EXCLUSIVE!**

FLATOUT HEAD ON

Is this the most original PSP driving game yet? Interview, tips and review inside!



DS

REVIEW

Asterix at the Olympic Games

Roman running and jumping...



REVIEW

Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney

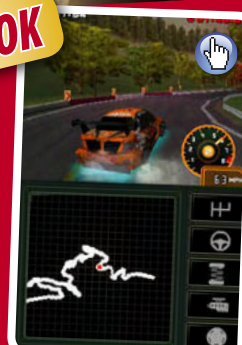
Get the verdict from our ace jury



FIRST LOOK

Race Driver: GRID

First off the grid with these hot new shots!



REVIEW

God of War Heaven or Hell?



PSP



>>> **EXCLUSIVE!**

Off Road

Check out this Ford focused new PSP driver

PLUS
WHICH NEW
PSP GAME
SCORES A
PERFECT 10?





It's always a pleasant surprise when a game suddenly appears with little or no build-up and turns out to be far more impressive than the lack of hype would suggest. *FlatOut Head On* is one such game this month. We thought it was one of the most playable, time-consuming and detailed driving games we'd seen for quite some time. Let us know what you think of it.

We've also got a big review in the form of *God of War Chains of Olympus* for the PSP, and we think (correction: we *know*) that it's good enough to get the perfect 10 out of 10 score.

As ever though, there's much more lurking under the surface of this magazine than that pair of big-hitters, so dally no longer on this waffly introduction and get stuck in to all the juicy stuff on the other side of this page. Enjoy!

Dean Mortlock, Editor
HGZine@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

They play games for a living, drive around in fancy sports cars and live in castles made of gold – they are... the writers.



Kath Brice

Kath may be scared of spiders, but what about wicks? Or licensed games based on movies?
PLAYING THIS MONTH:
The Spiderwick Chronicles



Dave Perrett

Surprising as it may seem, Dave is a natural athlete and perfect to play *Asterix* this month. **PLAYING THIS MONTH:** *Asterix at the Olympics*



Chris Schilling

What this man doesn't know about games really isn't worth knowing at all. Fact. **PLAYING THIS MONTH:** Everything



Mark Ramshaw

We reunited ex *Sega Power* editor Mark to Sonic for this issue.
PLAYING THIS MONTH:
Sonic Chronicles



Damien McFerran

Mobile guru Damien is the man to talk to about gaming on the go. PLAYING THIS MONTH: Tower Bloxx (mobile)

DON'T MISS!
This month's highlights



FLATOUT HEAD ON

Review, developer interview and tips, too. We give you the verdict on the PSP's most intriguing racer yet



THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES

The game of the film of the book comes to the DS. Review and exclusive interview inside

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

SONY PSP

Cid the Dummy
R-Type Command
Off Road
FlatOut Head On
God of War
Chains of Olympus
PSP News
Roundup

NINTENDO DS

Race Driver: GRID
Cid the Dummy
Sonic Chronicles:
The Dark
Brotherhood
The Spiderwick
Chronicles
Asterix at the
Olympic Games
Professor Layton

and the Curious Village
Apollo Justice:
Ace Attorney
Magic Made Fun
DS News Roundup

MOBILE PHONENews
Reviews

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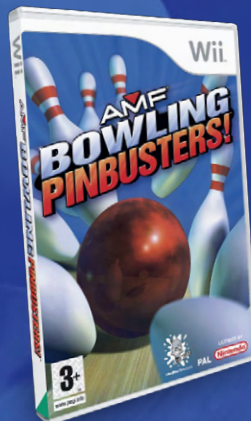
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PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: Firebrand Games
Heritage: Star Wars: Jedi Arena (Mobile), Race Driver: Create & Race
Link: www.codemasters.co.uk/games/?gameid=2613
ETA: Summer 2008

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
 Click here to tell us what you think of Race Driver: GRID

The track creator is flexible enough to allow players to spend time adjusting their track to the nth detail, or just to Free Draw one with the stylus for a quick race

Graphically, *Race Driver: GRID* should be another high point for the DS

"The fantastic track editor from Create & Race is back with a vengeance"

If you create a track that you're particularly proud of then you can upload it to the GRID website

A comprehensive Career mode joins the quick-fix challenges and time trial events

The ability to download new tracks should give the game longevity, while the leaderboards will give the very best racers something to aim for

Race Driver: GRID

Driving with stylus

LATEST NEWS

What's the story?

Race Driver: Create & Race was one of the surprise hits of last year. The DS game not only featured some genuinely gawp-worthy 3D graphics, but also a quite amazing track creation tool, too. Well now Codemasters are back, with a special edition DS game that's to be released alongside the home console versions this summer.

What do we know?

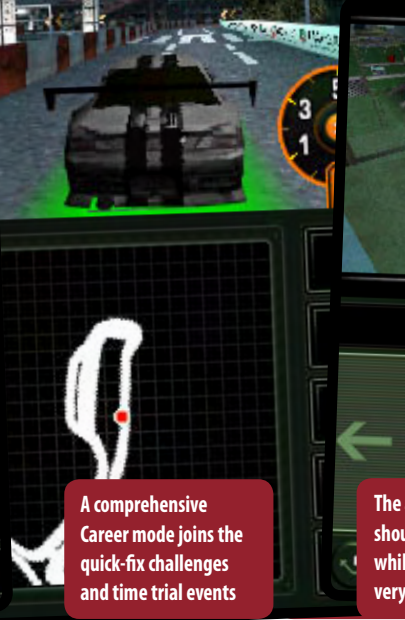
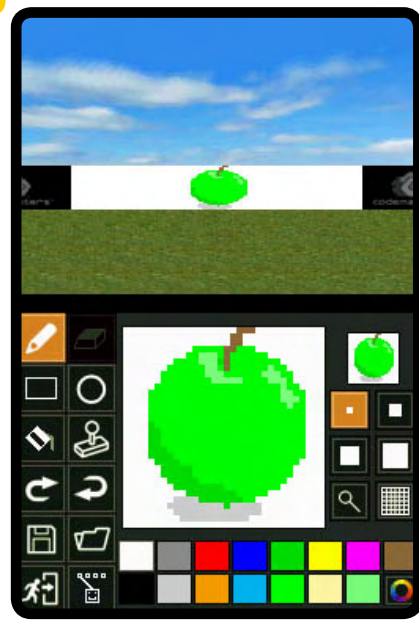
It still looks great, for starters. Codemasters are living up to their name with some of the fastest, smoothest 3D on the console, and the visuals are well up to scratch here. Races have more variety too – ranging from marquee events in Europe to street races in Tokyo. You can compete against other DS owners via Wi-Fi, or simply attempt to top the many online scoreboards. The fantastic track editor from *Create & Race* is back with a vengeance, tweaked to provide even more options. And – brilliantly – you can upload your self-made tracks to the *GRID* servers, or download some of the best ones created by other users.

When do we get more?

It's not out until the summer, but with a bit of luck we'll get some time with the game before then.

Anything else to declare?

You can now create your own designs for trackside hoardings and advertising billboards, making it one of the most personal racing experiences ever. Wonderful stuff.



Coming February 2008 for Wii™ and PlayStation® 2

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PlayStation 2



Wii

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PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

CONTROL →



CID
THE DUMMY

Publisher: Oxygen
Developer: Twelve
Interactive
Heritage: N/A
Link: [www.cidthe
dummy.com](http://www.cidthe
dummy.com)
ETA: Q2 2008

Naturally, there are boss battles at the end of the levels. We'd wager that this volcano boss could do with an icy blast or two to damage him...

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to tell
us what you
think of Cid
the Dummy

**"The bulk of the game is
reliant on third-person
platforming action"**

Cid the Dummy

Mannequin: The Return

**LATEST
NEWS**

What's the story?

In a future where compensation culture is rife, and safety is of paramount importance, Crash Impact Dummies (CIDs for short) have become a real moneyspinner for professor B.M. Werken (we're sure there's a joke in there somewhere). Saddened by the loss of his daughter, the professor creates an artificial replacement, MIA, who is promptly kidnapped by an evil megalomaniac. Imbuing one of the other dummies with human emotions, Werken sends this CID out to rescue MIA...

What do we know?

The gameplay is somewhat less bizarre than the premise, with the bulk of the game reliant on third-person platforming action for its thrills. As well as his fists, CID can rely on his bazooka in combat – it can fire non-fatal rubber bullets, or freeze or burn enemies. There's a fair amount of puzzling too, with CID's unique abilities put to the test in a series of unusual

conundrums. Shame then, that the environments are straight out of the Encyclopedia Generica, with sewers, castles and volcanos among the levels.

When do we get more?

It's out sometime between April and June, so expect more news in the next month or so.

Anything else to declare?

Bonus levels feature Crash Tests – drive a car at full speed in an attempt to crash through all the test area walls. Nice.

Smash against the crash barrier at high speed, and CID will hurtle through the windscreen – and hopefully through those walls. Ouch!

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R-TYPE COMMAND

Publisher: Atlus
Developer: Irem
Heritage: R-Type series,
 Disaster Report
Link: www.atlus.com/r-type
ETA: Summer 2008

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
 Click here to tell us what you think of R-Type Command



Squad positioning is key, as certain attacks can only be performed by facing your opponent directly

Some of the series' most famous bosses make a triumphant return – you'll need to have plenty of spare ships to beat them, though

This must surely be one of the most famous spaceships in videogame history



"This being a tactical role-player, all the action takes place on a hexagonal grid"

There are some nice short animations to accompany attacks on your enemies

R-Type Command

LATEST NEWS

The famous 2D shooter turns tactical

What's the story?

The original *R-Type* has to be one of the most celebrated 2D side-scrolling shoot-'em-ups ever made – and one of the most difficult too. Though the series has seen several quality sequels, Irem has taken the title of 2004's *R-Type Final* fairly literally, abandoning the game's roots and moving the series in a rather new direction.

What do we know?

Released in Japan last September, the game formerly known as *R-Type Tactics* arrived to a warm critical reception, though its fairly niche turn-based strategy gameplay meant it didn't exactly sell like hot cakes. You play through a series of 2D missions that make up two separate campaigns – one fighting as Earth's forces against the alien Bydo, the other with the roles reversed. This being a tactical role-player, it all takes place on a hexagonal grid, the main quirk being that, in a nod to the original, all units face to the right. There are over 100 units available in the game, making this a tad more complex than the likes of *Advance Wars* on the DS.

When do we get more?

It's due to be released in the States in May, with a UK release to follow shortly thereafter.

Anything else to declare?

The series' Force Units play an important part, acting as a strong, tank-like unit alone, or functioning as a shield and an attack booster when attached to one of the R9 ships.



Coming soon to your handheld

N+

Publisher: Atari | ETA: May

This retro-themed ninja platform-puzzler has already been released on Xbox 360's Live Arcade service, but it's also due to hit PSP this Spring. The game's minimalist graphics hide a game of surprising complexity, with its hundreds of levels often deceptively tricky to get through. With plenty of enemies to avoid and many death-defying leaps to make, this is one hell of an addictive game and perfect for playing on the move.



Super HIND

Publisher: Virgin PLAY | ETA: 5th May

The older readers among you may recall a terrific old Mega Drive game from EA named *Desert Strike*, an isometric shoot-'em-up where you commandeered a helicopter to blow up terrorists and rescue hostages. So when the Managing Director of *Super HIND* developer – the fantastically-named Mountain Sheep – referenced the game as an influence, our ears immediately pricked up. You'll get the chance to take the helm of 'the world's deadliest assault chopper' in a couple of months' time.

UEFA Euro 2008

Publisher: EA Sports | ETA: 18th April

We're looking forward to EA Sports' take on this year's tournament, which starts in June. There's a new Battle of the Nations online mode, and the ability to choose your own celebrations. Perhaps most interesting is the Captain Your Country option, where you have to earn the chance to lead your team to the final and lift the trophy.



Lego Indiana Jones

Publisher: LucasArts | ETA: 1st June

If you're anything like us, you're humming that theme tune already. The potent mix of adventuring and brick-assembling that made *Lego Star Wars* such a joy is in abundance here, except there's more of an exploration theme to the gameplay than before. With no Force powers, Indy has to rely on his ingenuity to get him through situations. With all the charm of *LSW* mixed with the thrills of the Indy films, June can't come soon enough.

Warriors Orochi

Publisher: Koei | ETA: April

Feudal Japan, whopping great swords, tons of characters and thousands of enemies. The *Warriors* series doesn't ever stray too far from the basic template, but if hacking hundreds of onscreen foes to ribbons is your thing, then you can't go far wrong with *Warriors Orochi*. We've played the Xbox 360 version and liked it a lot, despite its slightly repetitive gameplay. From what we've seen, the PSP version loses little in the transition to the smaller screen.

COMING
SOON

Coded Arms: Contagion (28th March)... Downstream Panic! (April)... Go! Explore (May)... SBK 08 Superbike World Championship (May)... Decathletes (23rd May)...
Secret Agent Clank (June)... Lego Batman: The Videogame (Q3 2008)... Crash: Invasion of the Bandicoot Snatchers (October)

DS

iNCOMING

Coming to a dualscreen near you!



High School Musical: Work This Out

Publisher: Disney | ETA: April 2008

The game of the second *High School Musical* film is coming very soon, promising a mix of rhythm-action and adventuring. With Troy, Gabriella and chums all making an appearance, and all ten songs from the movie sequel featured, this is perfect handheld fodder for fans of the Disney phenomenon.



Mysterious Dungeon: Shiren The Wanderer

Publisher: Sega | ETA: April

An update of a SNES RPG whose reputation has grown significantly over the years, this is a hardcore dungeon-crawler that's not for the faint-hearted. An adventure set in feudal Japan, you play a Ronin who sets out to find a secret land. It's from the makers of *Pokémon Mystery Dungeon*, so the developer has some expertise in this field. If you fancy a bit of an old-school challenge then it looks likely to hit the UK around Easter.

Dr Reiner Knizia's Brainbenders

Publisher: Eidos | ETA: 10th April

As if Kawashima wasn't quite enough, here comes another doctor and another brain-expanding DS game. All the puzzles have been designed by the titular boffin himself, a man with over 300 board games and books behind him – so expect some truly tricky conundrums. The various riddles are set over a series of global locations, ranging from Sydney Opera House to the Rio Carnival and taking in Aztec ruins in between. This globe-trotting adventure hits DS screens next month.



Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword

Publisher: Tecmo | ETA: March/April

Tomonobu Itagaki's legendary tough console scrapper makes its handheld debut with a stylus-based control method and some absolutely stunning graphics. Ryu Hayabusa returns to slice and dice his way through some ludicrously skilled opponents and a series of screen-filling bosses. With popular moves like the Cicada Slash and Izuna Drop available with simple swipes of the stylus, this could be the most accessible (although extremely difficult) *Ninja Gaiden* yet.

The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian

Publisher: Disney

ETA: 20th June

Based on the film of arguably the best book in the *Narnia* series (and arriving just before the movie), this DS tie-in is going to be somewhat different from the home console versions, adopting a fairly simple role-playing approach, and showcasing some effective storybook sequences with the DS held like a novel, *Hotel Dusk*-style. With stylus-based attack controls and some interesting mic usage, this should be a cut above your average licensed game.



Hannah Montana Music Jam

Publisher: Disney | ETA: 25th April

Disney's other music game is quite a different beast. *Music Jam* has a fairly basic adventure mode which will appeal to its young female fanbase, but it also offers a flexible music creation tool, with the ability to play lead, rhythm and bass guitars and drums. Unlike, say, *Jam Sessions*, you can pick individual strings of the guitars with your stylus, allowing you to create interesting songs which you can then save.



COMING
SOON

Hurry Up Hedgehog! (28th March)... George of the Jungle (28th March)... Draglode (11th April)... Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution (6th June)...
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness (April-June)... New International Track & Field (April-June)... SPORE (5th September)... Ghostbusters (Autumn)

MOBILE NEWS



Bioshock

Publisher: IG Fun | ETA: TBC

Bioshock surely ranks as one of the finest first-person shooters of recent memory, and it should come as no surprise to hear that a mobile iteration is on its way. Given the graphical splendour of the original, it's unlikely that we'll be seeing anything quite as breathtaking on our tiny handset displays, but if the developer takes care to incorporate the wonderful plot and ambiguous moral backdrop, then this could very easily end up being a game that's well worth waiting for.

Prison Break

Publisher: Vivendi | ETA: Spring 2008

Currently battling it out with *Lost* and *Heroes* is *Prison Break*, the hit US TV series that focuses on... well, the title kind of gives the game away, doesn't it? Like *Heroes* before it, this popular series is now getting its own mobile game, and developer Vivendi Games promises that it will contain plenty of action, suspense and puzzle solving. Presumably the puzzles will involve how to get out of locked cells?



Speed Racer

Publisher: Glu | ETA: Summer 2008

This 'so bad it's good' animated series is getting a Hollywood makeover courtesy of the Wachowski Brothers (of the *Matrix* trilogy fame), hence the flood of videogame adaptations that have been announced. Predictably, a mobile version is on its way too, although there's precious little information available at present. The film has the potential to be jolly good popcorn fodder, so fingers are firmly crossed that the interactive interpretations prove to be worthy of purchase, too.



Magnum PI

Publisher: Ojam | ETA: Spring 2008

Resplendent in a garish Hawaiian shirt and sporting a tache that would put Mario himself to shame, *Magnum PI* will soon be snooping around your mobile phone thanks to those thoughtful chaps at Ojam. The TV series may be unfamiliar to all but the most crusty of gamers (or those with a passion for old shows on cable or satellite), but the potential for a successful videogame version is huge – here's hoping they remember to include the iconic Ferrari 308 GTS...



Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow

Publisher: Glu | ETA: TBC

Leadng mobile developer Glu is putting its partnership with Japanese giant Konami to good use with its promising 2008 line-up. Not only do we have *Metal Gear Acid* on the way, but there's also this port of the excellent Gameboy Advance title.

The original featured hours of gameplay, bags of depth and plenty of blood-curdling action, so here's hoping that Glu can replicate this for our mobile phones – *Castlevania* deserves so much more than the recent (and thoroughly lamentable) *Castlevania: Order of Shadows* mobile game.

Appetite for Destruction

FlatOut reaches the PSP, and somehow driving games will never be the same again...

This is one of the better Stunt events – the object being to get your driver through as many rings as possible



What kind of minds create a driving game like *FlatOut*? Curiosity got the better of us, so we spoke to Empire's Steve Hickman about the most interesting PSP driving game we'd seen for quite some time...

In a sentence, can you describe *FlatOut* to someone who's never heard of it before?

High octane motorised anarchy, boasting the most destructive four-wheeled mayhem ever seen on PSP. It's got nine different game modes (including 36 Carnage challenges), a full career championship, Destruction

Derbies, multiplayer party mode and the bone-crunching Ragdoll stunt mode. The graphics look awesome too!

How similar is *FlatOut Head On* on PSP to *FlatOut Ultimate Carnage* on the Xbox 360?

It's similar in terms of having pretty much all of the game modes, environments and vehicles that you can find in *Ultimate Carnage*, and in that it has very large numbers of destructible objects on every track, peerless physics and very smooth, fast graphics too.

So what has been added for the PSP version?

Head On has a very strong emphasis on gameplay that works well on a handheld console, so Carnage mode (*FlatOut*'s 'pick up and play' arcade challenge) is the main game mode for the first time. We have also included Party mode, that allows up to eight

The arrows above the cars give you a clear indication of the amount of damage they've sustained



The Destruction Derby events are huge fun



It's not all off-road though, as some courses take place in the city

players to compete in the Ragdoll stunts, taking turns on a single PSP.

A traditional *FlatOut* Career mode (with buying, selling and upgrading cars) is also there for players who want to get a more in-depth experience of the *FlatOut* universe.

We love the Stunt events, but is there any that you'd have liked to have included but simply couldn't? And can you give us any Bugbear office high scores to try and beat?

We always have loads of ideas for Stunt events and test lots of these to see which are the most fun. We are pretty happy with the 12 we have managed to get in the game, though.

Here are some high scores to be getting on with:

- >>> High Jump: 173.8m
- >>> Stone Skipping: 1,080 points
- >>> Basketball: 58 points
- >>> Soccer: 398 points

Is there anything else you're currently working on that you can tell us about?

We are working on a PC version of *Ultimate Carnage*. Apart from that, all I can say is that the team are extremely busy on other projects. ●

>>> Flip the page for some exclusive tips straight from the developers!

FlatOut Head On: Getting Started

Who better to give you the most authentic tips on this new PSP driving game than the developers themselves? Over to you, guys...

Time for some bone-crunching *FlatOut* action! Launch yourself straight into the thick of it by firing up the Carnage mode and getting the mayhem on! Start off by selecting the Carnage mode and then the first Carnage race, which should give a pretty decent taster of the destruction to come.

Carnage race

When the race starts, go full throttle to gain the best air time and sector time bonus, as well as keeping up with the pack. This incredible speed also allows the player to smash straight into the competition with much greater force.

While passing through checkpoints it's a good idea to try and keep behind the lead racers so that you can crush them into the wall at the earliest opportunity, and if you find yourself in front then cheekily allow them to pass

to open up the next opportunity. Repeat this method of jostling and harassing at incredibly high speeds, gaining huge air and smashing into the scenery to obtain optimum points.

Remember to brake before corners or powerslide around them by using the handbrake, letting go of the accelerator, turning and then accelerating off.

>>> Taking a breather from the hectic race pace, we now move on to a stunt event...

Stunt event

The first Carnage mode stunt is the High Jump, and the aim of this one is to launch the driver as high as possible onto the net. Drive the car down the ramp as fast as possible and steer the vehicle left then right, left then right again past the barrels. As soon as the vehicle is past them, attempt to

straighten up the car while maintaining maximum speed and launch the character – before the launch line – by pressing and holding the Right shoulder button. While holding the R button, the launch angle indicator in the bottom left of the screen will go up. Wait until the angle is around 63 degrees before letting go of the button.

After launching, quickly hit the R button again to gain the best nudge possible. The player is given three attempts to achieve a high score with the best score counting.

■ Things to remember: When turning around barrels you should ease off the accelerator a little bit so you maintain control of the vehicle and launch the character before the launch line, as it takes a second to adjust the character's trajectory. Nudge early and do not use Aerobatics – don't steer the character – as this causes the character to lose distance.

>>> Okay, so now that you've had a chance to get your breath back it's time for the Destruction Derby... ➤



Read the tips below for some expert advice on the best way to tackle the High Jump Stunt

"Fire up the Carnage mode and get the mayhem on!"



Hit a car right on the corner and it'll spin uncontrollably, and you'll remain in control of your vehicle



You want to get an angle of around 63 degrees for the perfect High Jump

> FlatOut guide continued

Deathmatch Derby

When the race starts it will be a full head-on crunch, with all the vehicles facing each other, so you need to gain as much speed as possible and ram your vehicle into the side of another so that they sustain more damage than you. Use the map in the bottom-left of the screen to locate the other cars, try and get as much of a run up as possible while building up your speed and if you have any nitro then use it!

Look around for pick-ups as they appear to maximise the destruction. And if you flip your vehicle over then you can press the Triangle button to reset, but it's worth remembering that you'll lose points for doing this.

■ **Things to remember:** You can only collect one power up at a time so work out just which one is the most beneficial for you before you get it. The most vulnerable spots on your vehicle

Coming first is important, but there are many more points available for spectacular crashes



are the sides and back. Try to pick off vehicles which are critical – these have a red arrow above them.

>>> **Now for a solo pursuit to recover from the Derby annihilation...**

Beat the Bomb

With a bomb strapped to your back and only a few seconds on the clock, there's absolutely no time to waste. Go flat out from the start and try to find the optimal driving line to pass through as many checkpoints as possible. Each checkpoint gives a certain amount of additional time, so earn extra nitro by smashing into scenery objects and gaining maximum air time.

■ **Things to remember:** Try not to crash, as resetting your car results in a huge amount of time lost.

Single races

Go back out of the Carnage mode to the Main Menu and select Single Events, which lets you practice a race, Stunt or Derby on all of the tracks and courses against seven AI players.

>>> **It feels like now is the perfect time for some multiplayer party action with your mates...**

Party mode

In party mode you can play with up to eight of your friends on a single PSP.

First select the participants and the vehicles they wish to play with and then choose the Stunt events that are to be played – you can even select multiple stunts of the same type.

>>> **Now when you have some free time to yourself, take a hold of the**

"With a bomb strapped to your back there's no time to waste"



Human baseball on the PSP? FlatOut Head On has it all

Career mode, which is 20 hours of non-stop racing against increasingly competitive AI players...

Career mode

The Career mode comprises of over 100 races split over three race categories: Derby, Street and Race. Initially you'll only be able to enter the Derby races, but earn some more points and you'll be able to purchase vehicles from the other race classes and change from one race class to another without losing your progress in the other ones. ●

>>> **Check out page 19 for the full review of FlatOut Head On**

Off Road

Getting down and dirty with this new racer

Ford cars are solid, reliable cars. And *Off Road* – a game featuring Ford cars (and Land Rovers, for the sake of completeness) – is a very solid, reliable game. It may not be the most spectacular racer we've played, but we've enjoyed our hands-on time with this preview version.

Though track names are a little uninspired – Rocky Flats, Desert Dunes, Wild Canyon – the levels themselves show much more imagination, with plenty of humps, bumps and chicanes to fling your chosen vehicle around.

There's certainly a good sensation of speed, while everything is remarkably smooth given the impressive draw distance – these stages are big, long races, with plenty of opportunities to overtake. This isn't an F1 procession of cars by any stretch, as AI racers regularly jostle for position and provide a real test to your driving skills.

You have a choice of Quick Race, Career, Tournament and Arcade modes. The first does what it says to the letter, immediately picking a random track and vehicle to set you on your way. In

Though the texture work isn't brilliant, the outdoor locations feature impressive draw distance – and it all runs very smoothly indeed

The ice tracks aren't as slippery as you'd think, and there are invisible walls preventing you falling in the drink

SHOWROOM

F-250
DISCOVERY
F-350
RANGE ROVER SPORT
MIGHTY F-350
RANGE STORMER

It's a pity more options aren't instantly available from the main menu – players will have to be patient and unlock them in Career mode

the Arcade menu, only the options for Race and Time Attack are initially available from the huge selection of different events – until you've unlocked them in Career mode, anyway. There are twelve types in all, with traditional point-to-point races joined by interesting variations like Gold Rush and Damage Control – the latter

"AI racers provide a real test to your driving skills"

requires you to pick up repair pods to keep your vehicle below a certain level of damage.

Track design is generally impressive with several routes through each stage. Most have various forks in the road, and it's up to you to figure out which is the best route. Above the Easy difficulty, the AI opponents present a decent challenge, while the variety of events keeps things fresh. It runs pretty well too, although the graphics are slightly under-par – indeed the dusty desert levels look like you're driving on a sheet of TV static. Fingers crossed the finished version is a little more polished. ●

There are three different off-road environments – Water, Ice and Desert, comprising 24 tracks in total

Roll over screen for annotations



Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood

Sonic sidesteps his mid-life crisis with a game that reinvents Sega's favourite hedgehog as an RPG hero

Sonic? In an RPG? While the very idea of giving Sega's speedy mascot such an extreme makeover is enough to strike fear into the hearts of any self-respecting fan of 90's console gaming, there's one very good reason to trust Sega's judgement on this one. And that reason is Bioware.

Having risen to prominence with PC titles like *Baldur's Gate* and *Neverwinter Nights*, Bioware has become one of the leading lights of the RPG genre. It's hard to imagine a safer pair of hands ensuring that Sonic's transition is smooth, and far from the quick cash-in it could have been.

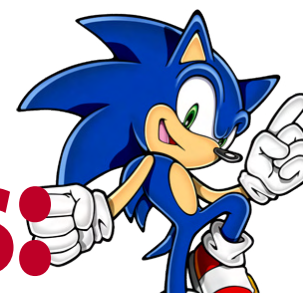
What Bioware has cleverly done is to re-imagine classic *Sonic* characters and locations, and used them to weave an immersive adventure that quite literally blends the light and the dark. Split into two acts, the game begins in Sonic's world, complete with familiar areas such as the Green Hill Zone and Mystic Ruins, before heading off into darker territory for a second act that takes place in an alternate dimension.

There's also the opportunity to put together a whole band of adventurers, including Knuckles, Amy and Tails. While RPGs aren't exactly renowned for

their edge-of-the-seat antics, Bioware has made the most of the stylus controller to add a real sense of speed – even throwing in some classic loop-the-loop action for good measure.

Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood may not initially seem like a natural side-step for Sonic, but all the signs so far

"Bioware has made the most of the stylus to add a real sense of speed"



We love the hand-drawn look of *Sonic Chronicles*



INTO THE BLUE

Chronicling Sonic's RPG exploits



Team Bonding

Special Ability

Quick Fight

Team Bonding

In time-honoured fashion, gamers have the opportunity to build up their own team of adventurers and then develop the strength, experience and equipment variables for each as they progress through the game's two distinctly different acts.

suggest Bioware hasn't so much put the final nail in Sonic's coffin as given him a shot in the arm, a spot of Botox, and even a cheeky shot of spike-reviving Viagra for good measure. ●

DS

HGZine

SONIC
CHRONICLES
THE DARK BROTHERHOOD

HOW COMPLETE?

75%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

90%

Sonic does Zelda? Count us in

The Spiderwick Chronicles

Just how easy is it to produce a licensed game? This and many other questions answered in our second top interview this month

Another exclusive interview now, as we talk to Catherine Dinh and Eric Heitman of Backbone Entertainment about the development of the latest movie license to hit the DS...

What can fans of the books expect to find in the game?

CD: *Spiderwick* fans can look forward to collecting a wide variety of hidden fairies and trading them with their friends via Wi-Fi. Many of the sprites

found in the *Care and Feeding of Sprites* book can be found in the game, too.

Is it easier to develop a licensed product or an original one?

EH: There are some ways in which licensed games are more challenging to develop, as time is always an issue. That's not unique to licensed games, but licensed game deadlines tend to be shorter and less flexible.

Having to meet a ship date to coincide with a movie launch definitely

requires a lot of discipline on the part of the team in order to keep the focus on capturing the best qualities of the license.

Is it easy to pick up and play the game even if you haven't heard of the story before?

EH: That's certainly the intention. Just like with a movie adaptation, assuming that the audience already knows the story makes the experience worse, even for those who do. While our goal with the story elements was to get players into the game as quickly as we could, the characters are such an important part of *The Spiderwick Chronicles*. We wanted to make sure that their personalities came through in the game, and that the adventure they go on is compelling, even without prior knowledge of the books or movie.

Are there any elements of the game that use the DS's unique features (touch screen, etc.)?

CD: The player can choose to control the character using the stylus throughout the entire game. There are environmental items that the player can interact with – such as bushes and rocks – to reveal sprites or items for your inventory. Also, some sprites can be collected by blowing into the microphone, or even closing the DS.

EH: Sprites can be traded wirelessly to complete sets and unlock optional bonus abilities (i.e. trading to get all of the Skate Sprites will speed up your characters in the main game).

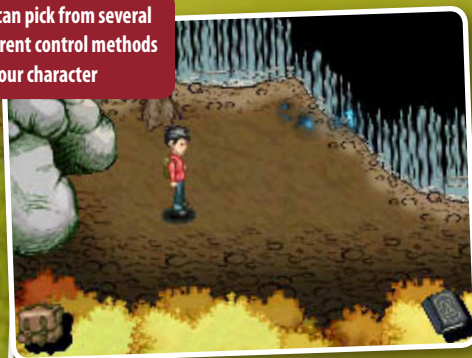
"The characters are such an important part of the story"



There are plenty of battles in the game and plenty of chances to upgrade your party



You can pick from several different control methods for your character



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Publisher: Empire
Developer: Bugbear
Heritage: Sega Rally,
FlatOut
Link: www.flatout
game.com
OUT NOW

**REVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to tell
us what you
think of FlatOut
Head On

Turbo boost into
another car and you
get a Power Hit bonus



FlatOut Head On



Human baseball? What madness is this?

It's hard to know where to start with a game like *FlatOut Head On*. A reviewer far lazier than myself would probably sum it up by saying that it's like *Burnout* on off-road courses. And, while that statement is true to some extent, there's more than enough depth and quality to *FlatOut* to make you want to investigate further.

Head-on collision

Need proof? Thankfully, that's easy. The variety starts off on the title screen, when you're given the choice of Carnage mode, FlatOut mode, the chance to participate in a single event or one of the multiplayer options. It's baffling at the start, but it soon makes sense, as Carnage mode is made up of individual events (and perfect for the PSP's short and sharp style of play), while FlatOut mode is more in-depth.

Here you begin by purchasing a car before entering a career-style mode that rewards your driving prowess with cold, hard cash.

Bored of that? Then why not enter the single events, where you can take part in a Destruction Derby or a range of 12 stunt events that see the driver catapulted through the windscreen in a series of bizarre Track & Field style events.

It's common for novelty features to be put into a game to make up for shortcomings in other areas, but we're happy to say that *Head On* is very well done throughout. The graphics



You're telling us – look at the state of your car...

Every collision is rewarded with an explosion of graphical excess

"The graphics engine thunders along at an impressive pace"

Hit something with a bit of force and you can really make a mess of the opposition

engine thunders along at an impressive pace and the general shine and polish is evident in every single corner of the game's massive range of options and game modes on offer.

FlatOut Head On ticks all the usual driving game boxes and adds a few more that you wouldn't expect. If you're looking for a hardcore racer that doesn't take itself too seriously, then this is about as good as it gets.

Dean Mortlock

THE FALL GUY

Three of the best stunts in the game



High Jump

Ring of Fire

Baseball

High Jump

As straightforward as it sounds, except that you're catapulting a 'ragdoll' human out through a car windscreen and up through the air to stick on a massive vertical net. We're sure that this violates some basic law of human rights, but we can't figure out which one. Actually, it's probably all of them.

HGZine Verdict This is classic PSP racing and huge amounts of fun, too

PSP

- Tons of game modes
- Super fast and smooth
- Endless gameplay

9

PSP



God of War: Chains of Olympus



A true god amongst games

We don't dish out 10 scores to reviews very often, so does that mean that *God of War: Chains of Olympus* is the perfect game? In a word, yes. Obviously there's a small minority of gamers who simply don't get their portable gaming kicks from third-person action games, but for the majority of us, it's pure gaming gold and faultless in every respect.

Kratos is the muscular hero of the previous two *God of War* games on the PS2. Games which were universally revered for their intelligent combat system, stunning graphics and screen-sized bosses. Squeezing all that down to a PSP was never going to be easy

but, miraculously, the developers have done all that we could have hoped for, and, quite possibly, a bit more, too.

Heavenly beauty

The first thing that impresses with this game are the graphics, as if there's been any corners cut in the graphics engine then they're impossible to spot. The massive levels feature an incredible amount of detail, and the lighting effects are simply stunning.

But there's also plenty of brain in this beauty though, as the gameplay is perfectly weighted to lead you gently through the early stages and then ruthlessly punish any complacency in



This is Kratos. Mess with him at your peril



My money's on the little guy...

"God of War is a game that's impossible not to worship"



Your weapon has a long range, so you can easily use this to your advantage

the later ones. Orbs are collectable by killing enemies and opening chests, and these add up to earn you new moves, combos and greater power in your magical attacks.

And we haven't even started talking about the bosses. Some completely fill the screen and need a definite routine to destroy. Best of all, when their energy level is close to zero, a button indicator will flash up, informing you that you're then able to finish them off with a devastating killer move.

So yes, *Chains of Olympus* is perfect. The loading times are non-existent, the control method has been intelligently ported over from the PS2 and it's guaranteed to take you more than a few hours to finish it. Simply put, this is a game that's impossible not to worship. ●

Dean Mortlock



A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Kratos' back story is a bloody one

We don't have the space to go into Kratos' full backstory here, but we can summarise it by telling you that Kratos has pledged himself to the Gods of Olympus and, in *Chains of Olympus*, he has to journey through 10 years of servitude. This means he gets to wander through unexplainable locations, killing ridiculously large monsters. Nice.

HGZine
Verdict

If there's a better game on PSP then we've yet to see it. Buy it now

PSP



Graphically outstanding



Wonderfully balanced combat



Hours of gameplay

10



Publisher: Vivendi

Developer: Stormfront Studios

Heritage: Eragon, The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

Link: www.spiderwickgame.com
OUT NOW

**REVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what
you think of
The Spiderwick
Chronicles



The Spiderwick Chronicles

Get taken away with the faeries...

If you ever need a reason not to go poking around in creepy attics, then forget what your parents told you about falling through the ceiling and learn from the mistakes of the children in this game. For while poking about in the attic of their new house (think creepy old mansion and not Barratt Homes) they discover a 'field guide to faeries' written by the house's previous owner Arthur Spiderwick, and end up being deluged by all sorts of bad goblins, ogres and pixies wanting it back.

Based on the book and film of the same name, *The Spiderwick Chronicles* gives you control of the three children that feature in them – Jared, Simon and Mallory. The game contains two simple elements (exploring and battling), and the latter is dealt with in a

turn-based way similar to the sort of RPG-lite system in the DS game *Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time*. If you bump into an enemy while exploring, the children take turns to attack it – or them, as there are often three or more enemies to fight at a time. Each has strengths and weaknesses – so, for instance, Simon isn't very strong but is good at using magic – and all sorts of items, magical sprites and shields found throughout the game can be used by them in turn.

Neat and tidy

It's a neat system, made all the better for using interactive stylus movements that determine the effectiveness of your attacks. And although it's clearly aimed at younger gamers so isn't too challenging, there's surprising depth to fights. The visuals in the game are basic

NO GHOSTS BUT LOTS OF GOBLINS

And boggarts, pixies and trolls, too

At the start of the game your enemies are no more powerful than boggarts, which are easily won over by handing them some honey, but they get bigger and stronger. Fortunately, winning goblin teeth from battles lets you buy new skills, while you can regularly level up each character too, giving them extra health, magical skills and power.

Fog can be cleared by blowing into the DS microphone and often reveals hidden sprites to collect

Magical sprites can help in a range of ways. There are Healing Sprites to heal your characters and Lifter Sprites, which move large objects out of your path

"The Spiderwick Chronicles packs a lot in for a children's game"

Fights offer lots of options. For instance, you can move characters to the back row if they're low on health

and cut corners but the control system is very intuitive, using a similar one to *Zelda: Phantom Hourglass* and the music is suitably atmospheric, too.

Trudging about the forest alternately foraging through bushes then fighting trolls might get a bit repetitive, but overall, *The Spiderwick Chronicles* packs a lot in for a children's game. It's simple but still smart and that makes it a rare treat among games of its type.

Kath Brice

**HGZine
Verdict**

A good film translation that will please young fans no end

DS

- Clever combat and system
- Lots of magical exploring
- Battles get a bit repetitive

8



Publisher: Atari
Developer: Smackdown
Productions
Heritage: N/A
Link: www.atari.com/asterix
OUT NOW

**REVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to tell
us what you
think of Asterix
at the Olympics

Asterix at the Olympics

Styluses at the ready – this Frenchman's got some Gaul trying to take on Mario and Sonic...

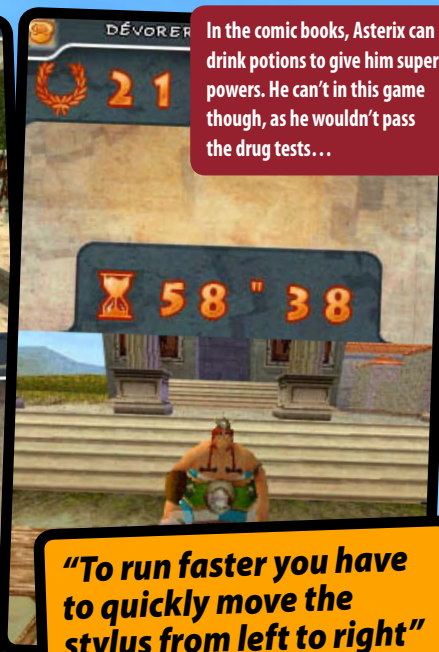
Famous as he undoubtedly is, French comic book hero Asterix doesn't have the same pulling power as videogame legends Mario and Sonic. But despite its lack of blue spikes and plumbing skills, *Asterix at the Olympics* is still a fine take on the ultimate sporting event.

In days of old it was written by the gaming gods that any sports game with even the slightest hint of track and field events in it had to be controlled by a frantic bashing of the buttons. Many joypads and keyboards were wrecked in the name of trying to set a new world record. These days though it's the touchscreen that gets a workout. So, to run faster you have to quickly move the stylus from left to right on the touchscreen, or to spin on the high bars you have pump your stylus in a circular motion.

The *Asterix at the Olympics* concept started out as a comic book and has since been made into a film, and as such there are several events that you won't find anywhere near this year's real Olympiad in Beijing. Events range from the plain old 100m sprint, to the slightly different take on a modern event, such as the menhir (big stone) tossing, to the plain odd – such as hula hoop twirling, yo-yo or the sack race.



For every event you successfully finish you'll earn cash to spend on new items that will boost your character and help you set records



"To run faster you have to quickly move the stylus from left to right"

In the comic books, Asterix can drink potions to give him super powers. He can't in this game though, as he wouldn't pass the drug tests...



At first the events are easy and you'll zoom through the first few stages, but they soon get much tougher



Roll over screen for annotations

better your chances to take gold. And it's the progression and challenge to improve that makes this game so addictive. Just like the real Olympics, there's always a new event to master, a record to break or a time to beat. It's not quite *Mario and Sonic*, but once you've started on your stylus-driven rise to greatness, you won't want to stop until gold is yours. ●

Dave Perrett

HGZine
Verdict

**This stylus-swiping
action deserves a place
on the podium**

DS

- Stacks of events
- Addictive learning curve
- The visuals need more polish

8



Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Level 5
Heritage: Jeanne D'Arc,
Rogue Galaxy
Link: www.professor
laytonds.com
ETA: April



**REVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what
you think of
Professor
Layton and the
Curious Village

Professor Layton and the Curious Village

"Curious Village is
easily one of the best
games on the DS"

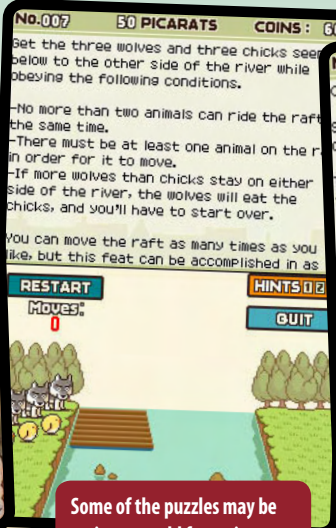
Hamlet the brain

Take one look at *Professor Layton*, and you could be forgiven for thinking it was an old-school adventure game – a bit like the point-and-clicks of yore, but with more of a puzzle-based bent. And you'd actually be completely wrong, as it's basically a series of short brainteasers with a story linking everything together. Not that these mindbenders have anything to do with the plot – occasionally linked in the most tenuous manner, the vast majority have no association with the story whatsoever. Thus, when a character shockingly vanishes, the first person you come to will yell something like "Oh no! But more importantly, can you solve this puzzle for me?"

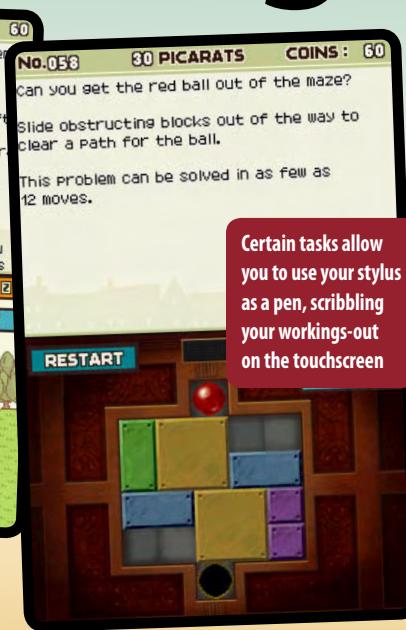
If all this sounds a wee bit rubbish, then you've been fooled once more, because *Curious Village* is easily one of the best games on the DS. The puzzles are often masterfully constructed, teasing you towards answers before pulling the rug from under you, with some lateral thinking frequently required. And the story is utterly charming. Centring on a strange European hamlet named St. Mystere,



There's already a second *Layton* game out in Japan, which was even more successful than the best-selling original



Some of the puzzles may be variants on old favourites, but the vast majority feel fresh and interesting



Certain tasks allow you to use your stylus as a pen, scribbling your workings-out on the touchscreen

ARE YOU ALL PUZZLED OUT?

There are testing times ahead for you then...

Besides the main puzzles in the game, you can unlock further tests by collecting painting scraps, tiny gizmos and items for Layton's and Luke's rooms – it pays to check every nook and cranny. Once you've seen everything the game has to offer, you can even download new puzzles each week via Wi-Fi. Marvellous.



there's kidnap, murder, intrigue and plenty of comedy – and a cast of memorable characters which are drawn in a beautiful cartoon style. The few cut-scenes are nicely done, and while the dodgy English accent of Layton's young sidekick Luke has a faint whiff of *Mary Poppins*, it all adds to the charm, particularly contrasted with the likeable Prof's plummy tones.

Solving puzzles might occasionally be a bit too easy, thanks to the abundance of hint coins, but figuring

out the right solution without help is incredibly satisfying. And the game saves arguably its best trick for the end, where suddenly the inappropriateness of all these questions suddenly makes glorious sense. It's a delightful touch in a game full of them, with tiny little rewards spread throughout its 130-plus riddles and a breezy, amiable air that you just might fall in love with. ●

Chris Schilling

HGZine
Verdict

A cerebral delight with a
magical story – another
DS treasure

DS

- Fantastic presentation
- Laugh-out-loud funny
- Wonderful puzzles

9



Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Heritage: Ace Attorney series, Resident Evil series
Link: www.ace-attorney.com
ETA: 11th April



REVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of *Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney*

Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney

Take that! New lawyer fills Phoenix's boots admirably

It was a brave decision for Capcom to say 'sayonara' to Phoenix Wright and introduce a fresh-faced new lawyer into the fold for the fourth game in the *Ace Attorney* series. It's a move that's paid off handsomely, as *Apollo Justice* somehow manages to live up to the brilliance of the previous games, despite its unfamiliar hero.

Apollo himself struggles at times to emerge from the shadow of Phoenix, but that's partly down to the fondness people have for the earlier *Ace Attorney* himself, not to mention Capcom's refusal to completely abandon all ties with the earlier games here. One story arc will definitely have a greater significance to series fans, and there's a drip feed of info tidbits throughout the four cases until several big revelations in the concluding turnabout.

The mechanics haven't changed too much either – it's still a case of investigating crime scenes, interviewing witnesses and significant others, before your day in court where you need to press testimonies or present evidence to sort out the

various contradictions. The admittedly slightly silly Psyche-Lock idea from earlier games has been abandoned for a new system where Apollo can 'perceive' when a witness is lying. While it's underused a little, it's definitely an improvement, and spotting tiny giveaway animations in close-up is a spine-tingling thrill.

Apollo landing

It almost goes without saying that the stories are the most important things, and *Apollo* gets off to a great start with the best opening case of the series to date. Despite anti-climactic finishes, the second and third stages are both hugely entertaining. It's the last case that puts this up alongside *Trials and Tribulations*, though – an epic closer with too many twists to count. Dialogue is – as always – tremendously witty, with pop culture references even more frequent than before.

Though the DS-specific additions – fingerprinting, footprint moulds and the ability to view items in 3D – don't immediately strike you as important,

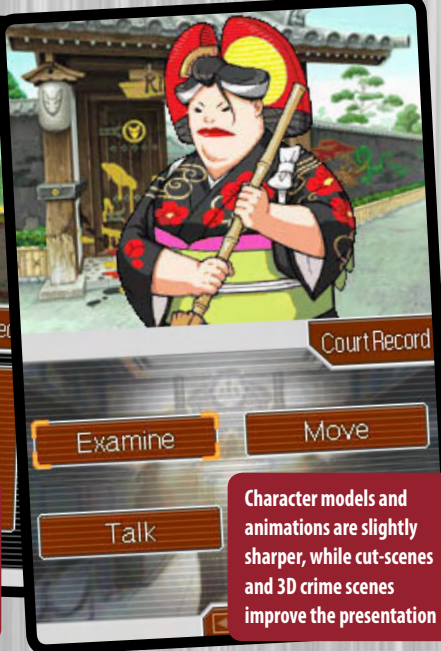
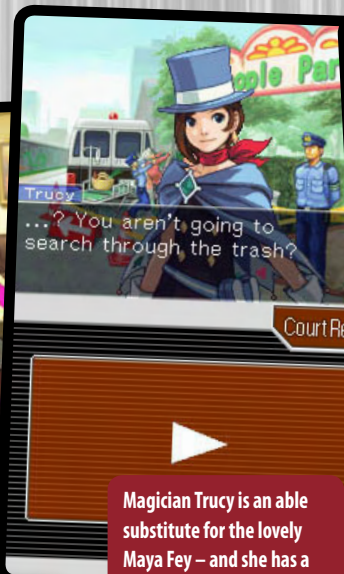
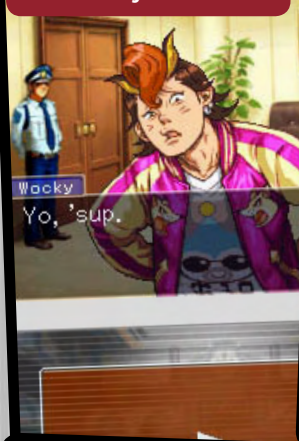
MAKING HIS DEUTSCHMARK

Putting the pro in prosecutor

Sticking to tradition, Capcom have crafted a prosecutor who's arguably more interesting than the game's protagonist. Though he doesn't quite rival the uber-cool Godot, German rockstar-cum-lawyer Klavier Gavin is so hip it hurts. His signature animation sees him play a riff on an air guitar as he challenges Apollo from the prosecution box. Silly? Perhaps, but you won't be able to stop smiling...



The supporting cast are the usual motley crew of weirdos. Gangster's son Wocky Kitaki is the accused in the game's second case



Magician Tracy is an able substitute for the lovely Maya Fey – and she has a surprising connection to more than one character...

Character models and animations are slightly sharper, while cut-scenes and 3D crime scenes improve the presentation

"There's a new system where Apollo can 'perceive' when a witness is lying"

after a while you realise how much they combine to add to the experience. *Ace Attorney* games have always been a joy to experience, but now they play better than ever. Glorious. ●

Chris Schilling

HGZine
Verdict

Justice is served – Capcom pull off another DS classic

DS

- ✓ 'Perceive' works brilliantly
- ✓ Terrific characters and cases
- ✗ Some turnabouts are too short

9

Magic Made Fun

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Tenyo
Heritage: N/A
Link: www.masterofillusion.net
ETA: Out now (US)

**REVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to tell
us what you
think of *Magic
Made Fun*

One of the only
downsides to the
game is that
everything has to be
meticulously unlocked

Penetrate the Magic Circle with this spell-binding package

Usually we'd worry about anything carrying the title '... Made Fun' – it implies that whatever it is can't be inherently entertaining, like 'Knitting Made Fun' or 'Sewage Treatment Made Fun'. But put all your concerns aside, as this is a corker. While having a suite of magic tricks inside your DS stretches the definition of 'game' a little far, this has to be one of the most innovative titles on the format and an entertaining way of bamboozling your friends for hours – or until they demand the secrets.

There are three modes: Solo Magic, Magic Show and Magic Training. Solo serves up a number of clever tricks to try on yourself, Magic Show allows you to perform feats on others and Magic Training is a curious mix of cute card games and skill-based tests.

Developed by magic specialists Tenyo, this package is surprisingly varied and strong. Along

This mystifying mutt can even sniff out an object chosen by a spectator from their pocket

Some of the mathematical puzzles have less impact, though can still be baffling

with predicting and revealing cards in startling ways (a pack of trick cards is supplied), the DS will also read the mind of a spectator, respond to voice input and even perform spooky and surprising animations.

Imagine getting a friend to draw a face on the touchscreen then asking them to place an object above, below or to the side of the DS – the eyes will then animate and look right at the object! Or asking them to choose a card (without showing you) and the face on the DS comes to life and names

The clear and friendly illustrations ensure that learning all the tricks is child's play

"Your DS can become your very own pocket David Blaine"

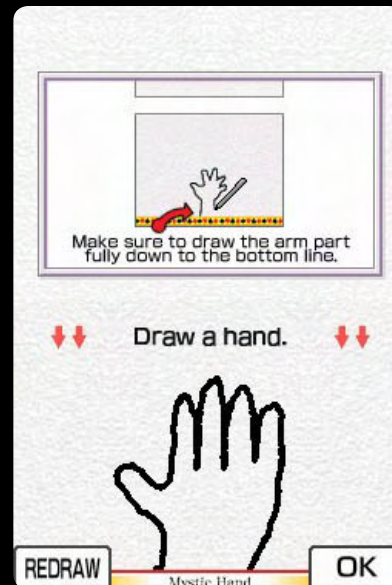
the very card they selected. It all sounds impossible but with clever signalling, your DS becomes your very own pocket David Blaine.

Sure, there are one or two duffers but the strong ones more than compensate. If you hate magic then this won't change a thing, but anyone who appreciates a bit of wonderment will love *Magic Made Fun's* clever fusion of technology and psychology.

Mark Walbank

SLEIGHT OF HAND

Our pick of the tricks



Mystic Hand

Two Candles

Finger Yoga

Mystic Hand

Mystic Hand is a clever and very startling example of an animation trick. First you must ask your spectator to draw a hand. Once they've completed their work of art, three gems will appear in the top screen representing Wealth, Love or a Dream. As soon as they say which one they desire the hand moves and grabs the correct gem.

**HGZine
Verdict**

Charming, sophisticated and heart-warming – another DS gem

DS

- Spooky animations
- Great variety
- Some obvious tricks

8

REVIEW ROUND-UP PSP

Dragoneer's Aria

Information: Koei | ETA: Out now

Dragoneer's Aria is the latest in a long line of dragon games that completely fail to do justice to the majesty of the mythical fire-breathers, this time with an RPG that's so formulaic and so traditional that we thought the UMD had disrupted the space-time continuum and taken us back to the Nineties. It looks nice enough, and the soundtrack is pretty excellent, but boy is it a grind. Even in the game's first couple of dungeons you'll get enemies that remove half your energy in one hit, so the only way to progress is to repeat battles over and over until you're powerful enough to take out the bosses in two or three turns.

It's teeth-grindingly slow, too. If you're after another RPG and you've somehow exhausted the PSP's already plentiful supply, then this might just be worthwhile. Otherwise, avoid.



- Well, the music is terrific
- Unfortunately it's way too tough for most
- Languid pacing

Aria of sorrow

5

Riviera: The Promised Land

Publisher: 505 Games | ETA: 28th March

As a remake of a two-year-old GBA game, Riviera doesn't really do enough different to woo those who played through the original. As a game in its own right though, it's terrific. It has a tremendous story, loveable characters and some luscious visuals that simultaneously pay homage to the GBA title and forge an identity of their own.

A wonderful soundtrack, some decent voice acting and a ripping yarn surround the enjoyably strategic combat that makes up the bulk of the gameplay. This *Promised Land* isn't quite the gaming nirvana its name would suggest, but there's a lot to love here, not least an intriguing dating element which allows the protagonist to take his pick from an array of female sidekicks.



- Beautiful audiovisual presentation
- Addictive battling
- Too similar to the original

Nothing wrong with a bit of bump and grind

7

MX vs ATV Untamed

Publisher: THQ | Release date: Out now

All the fun, thrills and spills of motocross racing, but without the muddy pants and the sore backside. That's what *MX Vs ATV Untamed* promises, but unfortunately doesn't quite deliver to a satisfying degree. It's a solid racer, with several different event types – ranging from basic races to stunt challenges – but none of these really live up to the craziness that's suggested by the 'off the hook' name. In its favour though, it offers some impressively large environments, which run well on the whole, and the game's guitar-heavy soundtrack is also praiseworthy.

The difficulty in general can be fairly erratic, with the Flag Challenges for example proving much harder than the Time Attacks. There are better racers on PSP, but few are quite this dirty. If off-roading's your thing, then go nuts with *Untamed*.



- Decent graphics and sound
- Plenty of events to play through
- No online multiplayer though

Wild at heart, but not in execution

6

"Patapon is one of the most original games you'll ever see on your PSP"



Recommended PSP Releases

Recent stuff you should try

Patapon (Sony)

Weird, wonderful rhythm-action strategy that's one of the most original games on PSP.

Medal Of Honor Heroes 2 (EA)

Tremendous handheld FPS, with tons of Nazi-shooting action and an amazing online multiplayer mode.

Silent Hill Origins (Konami)

Turn the lights down, plug your headphones in and prepare to be scared by this chilling horror.





"Advance Wars: Dark Conflict is a slice of portable strategy heaven"

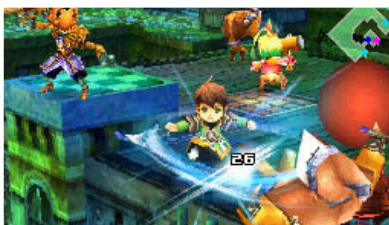
REVIEW ROUND-UP

DS

Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates

Publisher: Square-Enix | ETA: 14th March

Ring of Fates is a dungeon-based hack and slash which sees you collecting treasure, bashing monsters and solving puzzles – none of these are done spectacularly, but all are solid and combine to produce some thoroughly enjoyable gameplay. It's not the longest single-player experience but it's the multiplayer game that will have you coming back for more, as you hijack loot from under your mates' noses, or hoist a rival above your head to prevent them collecting precious gems.



- 👍 Fantastic graphics and soundtrack
- 👍 Multiplayer is a hoot
- 👎 Players disappear behind scenery

8

What a gem

Ratatouille: Food Frenzy

Information: THQ | ETA: Out now

Food Frenzy is made up of a series of mini-games that range from chucking sponges at snails in a kitchen to flipping fish between pans and eventually onto plates once they're cooked. To take these two examples as cases in point, the former bizarrely stops halfway through and asks you to do the same laborious task again, while the latter's touchscreen controls just plainly do not function properly. Sadly, the presentation could be considerably better, too. Quite simply, it all feels like a poor spin-off rather than a worthy addition to the Ratatouille game library and really should be avoided at all costs.



- 👍 Er, well there's a nice style to the graphics
- 👎 Dull mini-games
- 👎 Weak presentation and controls

4

A culinary mistake

Miami Nights: Singles in the City

Publisher: Ubisoft | ETA: Out now

Miami Nights recreates a lifestyle that's utterly vacuous, but this lite Sims clone is moderately fun – in very small doses, though. The only way to get anywhere is to focus on your appearance, chat about trivial topics, and act in a morally dubious manner. The occasional pervy moments feel out of place though, while its characters are even more disturbing, resembling polygonated serial killers with weird, staring eyes and rictus grins. If the basic game engine was well done then we'd be happier about recommending it, but it all feels rushed and half-finished.



- 👍 The occasional flash of inspiration
- 👎 Dubious morals
- 👎 Poor graphics

4

Not a good look

FIFA Street 3

Publisher: EA Sports | ETA: Out now

The return of the game that's more like basketball than the sport it supposedly represents. FIFA Street is sadly disappointing, from the rough character models to the delay between controller input and player action. You can choose from touchscreen or button controls, but both are equally flawed, while at times it's near-impossible to score thanks to your hopeless AI teammates, who seem to be playing a different game where the object is to avoid the ball altogether.

Chaining tricks eventually gets you a Gamebreaker, where you have to tap the screen when commands pop up in order to grab a certain goal – except the CPU counters it nearly every time. Stick to FIFA or PES.



- 👍 The music's not bad
- 👎 The controls could be better
- 👎 Slow and unresponsive

4

A good idea badly executed

Recommended DS Releases

Recent unmissable goodies

Advance Wars: Dark Conflict (Nintendo)

A slice of portable strategy heaven. Be warned though, as it's evening-eatingly addictive.

Bleach: The Blade of Fate (Sega)

One of the best handheld scrappers around – this 2D beauty from Treasure will last you ages.

Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games (Sega)

Clapping to warm up the crowd is just one of the many genius touches in this pocket-sized DS sportathon.



MOBILE REVIEWS

All the latest from the world of mobile phone gaming



Pang Returns

Publisher: TopGam

The latest arcade classic to receive a mobile update, *Pang* is thoroughly enjoyable retro fun. The idea is to clear the screen of bubbles by harpooning them. Doing so causes larger bubbles to divide into smaller ones until they eventually disappear. The concept is basic but it's bags of fun. While it could be argued that a little more innovation would have helped, *Pang Returns* remains a solid title.

- 👍 Addictive fun
- 👍 Eye-catching visuals
- 👎 Lacking in originality

As enjoyable as it ever was

8

Tower Bloxx Deluxe

Publisher: Digital Chocolate

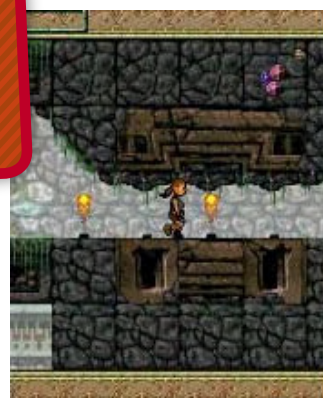
The original *Tower Bloxx* offered addictive gameplay that was perfectly suited to mobile play. Now Digital Chocolate has updated the concept with this *Deluxe* version. The graphics have been given a facelift but little else is altered, and this is no bad thing when you're talking about one of the best mobile games of the past few years.



- 👍 Lovely graphics
- 👍 Compulsive gameplay
- 👍 Hours of enjoyment

The best just got better

9



Tomb Raider Anniversary

Publisher: Eidos

Lara Croft is a videogame icon that surely needs no introduction by now, and merely placing her in a mobile game is likely to cause it to sell by the bucket load. Sadly, as this latest instalment so perfectly proves, that often means the actual gameplay suffers. While *Anniversary* does a commendable job of replicating Miss Croft's diverse range of movements in a 2D format, the lacklustre level design and unforgiving difficulty level ironically prevent her from scaling the heights she's previously been famous for.

- 👍 Pleasing control
- 👎 Harsh challenge
- 👎 Disappointing gameplay

Lara fails to get pulses racing

5

Mobile Battles: Reign of Swords



Publisher: Punch Entertainment

The connectivity aspect of mobile phone handsets is something that the games developers have been traditionally reluctant to investigate, but *Mobile Battles: Reign of Swords* proves once and for all that it is certainly an area worth exploring. Playing like a medieval version of Nintendo's popular *Advance Wars* series, this strategy title showcases a pleasing visual hook, plenty of depth and a wonderfully robust multiplayer mode. Rarely are games of this type so comprehensive and fully formed.



- 👍 Attractive visuals
- 👍 Excellent multiplayer mode
- 👍 Bags of depth

Mobile strategy at its best

9



RECOMMENDED
Four mobile games you must own

Devil May Cry: Dante's Awakening 3D

(Capcom)

Hack and slash mayhem that's well worth dying for.

Amped

(Player One Sports)

Perfect snowboarding action for your mobile.

Super Collapse

(RealArcade)

More classy portable puzzle action.

Bobby Carrot 5: Bobby Forever

(FDG Mobile)

You just can't keep a good rabbit down.



S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl

Publisher: Nomoc

Loosely based on the critically acclaimed PC game of the same name, *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* sees you infiltrating the radioactive wasteland of Chernobyl and facing off against all manner of mutated nasties. As you might expect, some corners have been cut in order to scale down the PC experience for the mobile version – the game is in 3D but you have little in the way of freedom. Sadly this impacts on the gameplay and things get boring quickly, regardless of how pretty it looks.

- 👍 Stunning 3D graphics
- 👎 Too restrictive
- 👎 Gets dull fast

An ambitious failure

4



WIN!

A COPY OF ASTERIX AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES!

● The good thing about sports games is that you can pretend that you're doing a full workout on your console, but what makes Asterix at the Olympic Games so great is not only that it's great fun, but if you enter our latest HGZine competition then you stand a chance of getting hold of a copy on DS for free as we've got five copies of the game to give away!

Asterix at the Olympic Games scored a respectable 8 out of 10 in this issue's review and

it's an original and highly playable take on the standard Olympics. With over 100 events and tons of game modes, it's the perfect game to play while you're waiting for the real Olympics to start in June.

To enter the competition, just answer the amazingly simple question to the right and email it to HGZine@gamerzines.com before the 30th of April, putting 'Asterix competition' in the subject line of your email. Good luck!

> Inbox

Your questions answered and your fears put to rest, courtesy of HGZine!

YOU SEEMED TO SUGGEST that *Assassin's Creed* really is something special on the DS, but having played it on the Xbox 360, I can't see how the people that make it can ever hope to make a game that's anywhere near as impressive on the next generation consoles – as the DS obviously can't create something that looks as good.

Alan Bree, Newcastle

>> Well Alan, that's the classic trap to fall into, as it's really all about the gameplay at the end of the day. Having played *Assassin's Creed* on the DS for hours, we're happy to say that not only is it one of the better

games you'll see on DS this year, but it's also a worthy DS version of the next generation best seller.

I WANT TO USE MY DS AS AN MP3 PLAYER (as I can't afford an iPod) and I know that you can play music on a PSP, but can you do the same on a DS? And if so, how do you do it then?

Lee Munday, Stoke

>> You can buy several MP3 add-on devices for the DS. The main one is the official Nintendo MP3 Player, which will cost you around £30 – and you'll need to buy a SD memory card, too. They're not too expensive though, and you should be able

How long do you play a game for before you're able to review it? My friend says it's only about an hour, but I reckon you must play it for lot longer. Please can you answer this question as we have a bet on the result! Thanks.

Mark Thomas, Bristol

>> The simple answer Mark is that we play our review games for as long as possible. The longer we can play it, the more sure we are of the score we're going to give it. In most cases, we try and complete the games, which is the only real way of accurately working out exactly how big it actually is.



Assassin's Creed on the DS – more than a match for the Xbox and PS3 versions?



STAR LETTER
This month the star letter gets a copy of *FlatOut Head On* for the PSP!

to pick up a 1GB (enough for about 300 songs) for around £10.

YOU GUYS (AND GIRLS) ROCK! This is one of the best gaming mags I've read for years! And it's free! I can't believe it. Am I dreaming? Keep up this excellent 'project'! I'm really looking forward to your next mags.

Arnstein Aas, via email

>> No Arnstein, you're not dreaming, but we're glad that you like our mags – praise from people like you makes it all worthwhile.

I'VE GOT ENOUGH MONEY for either a PSP or DS and I don't know which one to buy. I really like RPGs and strategy games, so which one do you recommend that I buy?

Simon Lowe, Brighton

>> Both consoles have a good range of role-playing and strategy games (the PSP, especially, has had a few good ones released recently), but with *Zelda* and *Advance Wars* both appearing on the DS, then we'd probably go for that.

GAME MATTERS

Your thoughts on the games you really want to play...

I THINK THAT THE DS is the brainiest console ever made. How? Because not only can it play games and test your brain skill, but now it can also do magic tricks, too!

Rubes, via email

>> I know, clever isn't it? We've played *Magic Made Fun* loads and we still can't work out where the DS is hiding the cards.

I LOVE SPORTS GAMES and want to buy an athletics game for my DS, but should I get *Mario & Sonic* or wait for a bit?

James Milne, Belfast

>> *Mario & Sonic at the Olympics* is a great game (as is *Asterix at the Olympic Games*), but *Decathletes* and a new *Track & Field* game are both coming out fairly soon, so you might want to see what they're like before you shell out.

SO WHAT IS IT WITH all these blooming courtroom drama games? I can't believe that the developers actually think that we'd want to play something that's as boring as that.

Neil Slater, Wokingham

>> They're a lot more fun than you'd think. No, really.

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Sonic is about to star in his first ever RPG, and we're planning on bringing you an exclusive feature on exactly how the developers aim to do it. Find out the full story next month

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